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## The store is NOW CLOSED



Fred and Eleanor Arbour will retire at the end of February, closing their longtime business, Klager's Meats, in Pelham. See more, Page 2.

MARYANNE FIRTH/QUI AGENCY NIAGARA

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# LOCAL NEWS

## ■ BIZZ BUZZ

# Klager's Meats closure ends an era

**MARYANNE FIRTH**  
QMI Agency Niagara

It has always been the place Eleanor Arbour considered her second home.

But on Saturday, she and her husband Fred hung a Closed sign in the window for the final time.

Klager's Meats, a staple Fonthill business that has served customers for decades, closed so the Arbours can exchange their butcher's aprons for the comfy clothes of retirement.

"You just get to a certain age when you have to do it," Eleanor, 70, said last week from the Pelham St. shop

where she's been working since the age of 12.

Fred suffered a heart attack about five years ago, and since that point the pair have been weighing their options for the future.

When their son Jamie recently found a new job and announced he'd be leaving his spot behind the counter, the Arbours decided it was time to give retirement a shot.

"It was the perfect chance for us," said Fred, who has worked at the family business for 48 years.

It's a bittersweet parting for Eleanor, whose father Gordon Klager opened the butcher

shop 81 years ago in the same location where it sits today.

"It's always difficult to say goodbye," she said, "but at some point you just can't continue working day and night."

The husband and wife, as well as their son, spend six days a week serving their clientele, whether at the shop or at the local market during the warmer months, sometimes putting in 16-hour days.

Jamie, who has "never known a Saturday off," had also been working at the shop since he was old enough to help out, Eleanor said.

While the business has been around for a long time,

Fred, 72, admitted "everything at some point needs to come to an end."

Eleanor has many memories of the store, its customers and its staff over the years.

"This was all I ever knew," she said with a smile. "I grew up with it."

"That's what I'm going to miss most, are the people. You get to talk to people, watch their families grow up."

She loves hearing people reminisce about coming into the shop as children.

It's that interaction the Arbours will miss most.

"We want to thank our customers for all the years

they've given us. There are some people we've known for years," Fred said with a smile.

"Hopefully we'll still cross paths."

They may be headed toward retirement, but the couple show no signs of slowing.

They intend to continue their work with the local Lions and Lioness clubs, where they've each been members for more than 40 years, and are looking forward to tending to their acre of property just outside Pelham's borders once the weather warms.

Retirement also means

more spare time to spend with 10-year-old grandson Gordon Arbour, who the couple says has taken the closure the hardest.

The Arbours hope to rent out the storefront and retain ownership of the building, though only time will tell what happens, Eleanor said.

The only certainty is that shoppers will have to find a new locale to stock up on their favourite burgers for their summer barbecues and Christmas hams for holidays.

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## ■ NIAGARA PENINSULA HAWKWATCH: 41st annual event takes flight Sunday

# Birders fix eyes to the skies

**ROB HOULE**  
QMI Agency Niagara

This year is for the birds. The 41st annual Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch is underway at Beamer Memorial Conservation Area in Grimsby and will continue every day until May 15.

NPH director of special projects Bruce Mackenzie said this year his group of 60 or so birdwatchers expects to count upwards of 14,000 raptors, including hawks, eagles, falcons, vultures and ospreys.

He said Beamer is an ideal location to cast eyes to the sky because the raptors do

not fly over large bodies of water, preferring to save energy by gliding from thermal current to thermal current above land masses.

"They follow the shoreline," Mackenzie said. "Beamer ... is one of the focal points of their migration. The birds get funnelled into a very narrow flight path."

That narrow flight path, combined with the fact the hawks fly only during the day, means birders at Beamer can get the most accurate count of raptors headed north.

"Beamer was discovered

in the middle-1970s as the best point along the Niagara Peninsula to observe these birds," Mackenzie said, noting the narrowest point in the peninsula between Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment is in Grimsby.

Data collected during hawkwatch is forwarded to the Hawk Migration Association of North America.

"That association tabulates all of the data from the different hawkwatches across North America so that a continent-wide picture can be developed for hawk populations and changes to them," Mackenzie said.

Mackenzie said Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch has counted more than 500,000 raptors over 40 years.

He said members of the public are encouraged to come out and learn from experienced hawkwatchers.

"Because we're close to urban centres, this is an excellent opportunity for people to come, not only to observe, but for people to come out and learn from the counters who are there," Mackenzie said.

He said hawkwatchers will be more than pleased to share insight on identification of the birds and their

## ON THE WEB

For more information on Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch, go to: [www.niagarapeninsulahawkwatch.org](http://www.niagarapeninsulahawkwatch.org).



PHOTOS BY BARRY CHESTER/NIAGARA PENINSULA HAWKWATCH

A bald eagle flies over Beamer Memorial Conservation Area in this undated photo. Inset: A red-tailed hawk flies over the conservation grounds.



A red-tailed hawk flies over Beamer Memorial Conservation Area in this undated photo.

rob.houle@sunmedia.ca  
Twitter: RobH\_Standard

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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **POLITICS:** Headlines reshaped at southern-tier luncheon

## Mayors put emphasis on teamwork

SARAH FERGUSON  
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara's municipalities must work together in order to achieve success, say the southern tier's mayors.

"This is an exciting time for Niagara because never before has there been such potential for our future," Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop said Thursday during the Southern Tier Mayors' Luncheon at the Fort Erie Leisureplex banquet hall.

"The local municipalities understand that the success of any one of us is really dependent on the success of all of the other municipalities," he added.

Redekop, with mayors Dave Augustyn of Pelham, Frank Campion of Welland, Jim Diodati of Niagara Falls, April Jeffs of Wainfleet and John Maloney of Port Colborne came together to highlight important projects in their respective communities as well as have a significant economic

impact on Niagara in its entirety.

The event was hosted by Welland-Pelham, Port Colborne-Wainfleet, Greater Fort Erie and Niagara Falls chambers of commerce.

In general — it was a recap of recent headlines. Redekop noted three "potential game-changing developments" in the works for Fort Erie: the Canadian Motor Speedway, the revitalization of Miller's Creek Marina and the redevelopment of Fort Erie Race Track.

Augustyn spoke of the eastern expansion of Fonthill and the possibility of a new community centre and area facility.

Campion and Maloney both talked about municipalities offering financial incentives to attract new investment and development of employment lands.

Similarly, Jeffs spoke of small business and how its establishment in Wainfleet is important to Niagara's economy.

"We are a little spoke in the big

wheel but we are still a spoke," she said.

Jeffs said the leaders of Niagara need to focus on being a resource and a strong support system for local business.

"From the lady who makes soap in her basement, employing two close friends, to the gran-

ite countertop manufacturer employing 25 individuals who is on the cusp of expanding to 50 or more employees, how do we help them?" Jeffs asked.

"We create a prosperous environment, we let them know we are here, we are listening and we're willing to help. We will work

to foster thriving region."

Diodati said he is focused on bringing the GO train to Niagara and enhancing tourism in the region.

"The GO Train will be the economic silver bullet for the Niagara region. It will have more impact than anything else we can do,"

Diodati said.

Crucial to attracting visitors, Diodati said GO will bring tourists who will want to stay in Niagara longer to explore its wineries, vineyards, its racetrack, beaches and more.

sarah.ferguson@sunmedia.ca



SARAH FERGUSON/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

From left, Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney, Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop, Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati, Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs, Welland Mayor Frank Campion and Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn spoke about the future of the region during the Southern Tier Mayors' Luncheon Thursday at the Fort Erie Leisureplex banquet hall.

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# Explaining your town tax increase

**DAVE AUGUSTYN**  
For Pelham News

We approved the 2015 operating budget during our town council meeting on Feb. 17. It translates to an increase of 1.92% for the average residential Pelham property (assessed at \$302,815).

While council approved a minimal impact to you and other property taxpayers, we did increase the town's level of service and support the ongoing sustainability of our infrastructure.

First, the budget again required town departments — including the library — to hold at a zero budget increase while continuing to develop efficiencies and cost savings.

Second, we allowed only "uncontrollable" increases — like for WSIB

(Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) coverage, Canada Pension Plan, or insurance premium — and a cost of living adjustment equivalent for staff. (I use the word "equivalent" because over the past 18 months the town developed a staff performance management system to foster innovation and exceptional service and to discourage mediocre work.)

Third, based on increased service requests from the community, council approved adding two equipment operators to the public works department. These new, front-line staff will help the town maintain our infrastructure and better serve the public. (Applications close March 13 at [www.pelham.ca/career-opportunities](http://www.pelham.ca/career-opportunities).)

Finally, because of our ongoing commitment to improve town infrastructure — such as roads, sidewalks, and parks

— we again added a 5% increase on the transfer to our 2015 capital budget.

As a result of these and other initiatives, council approved a net budget increase of \$336,887 (on a \$10,865,969 net budget) or 3.46% before adjusting for real assessment growth.

Real assessment growth — from new businesses, new homes or improvements to existing properties — was valued at \$98,478 or 1.01%. (This growth has nothing to do with Municipal Property Assessment Corp.'s changes in market value assessment of existing properties.)

After accounting for that growth, the net effect on the tax levy will be \$238,409 or an overall 2015 operating budget increase of 2.45%.

What does that mean for your pocket book, you ask?

Well, the average residential property

value for 2015 is expected to be \$302,815. If your home and property were assessed at that value, you would be paying an additional \$26 — or 1.92% — for a total of \$1,381 for the Pelham portion on your property tax bill.

From what we are seeing, Pelham will likely have the lowest or second lowest increase in Niagara again this year.

I will write more about your total property tax impact after regional council approves the 2015 rates and ratios later this spring.

For more information about Pelham's operating budget, please check out [www.pelham.ca/town-hall/budgets-reports](http://www.pelham.ca/town-hall/budgets-reports).

You may contact Mayor Dave at [mayordave@pelham.ca](mailto:mayordave@pelham.ca) or read past columns at [www.pelhammayordave.blogspot.com](http://www.pelhammayordave.blogspot.com).

# Shipwrecks — Carina

**SKIP OLLIHAM**  
For QMI Agency Niagara

Carina was fresh from the Austin & Pickersgill shipyard in Sunderland, England, when it began coming to the Great Lakes in 1969.

The 141-metre-long carrier, built of the popular SD-14 design, had been launched on Feb. 25, 1969, and completed on April 3. Carina operated under the flag of Liberia until it was re-registered in Greece as *Alfoussa* in 1978. By 1986, the ship was now under a fourth name of *Hymetus* and carrying Lebanese registry when it got into trouble in the Far East.

On Nov. 16, 1986, *Hymetus* encountered heavy weather carrying a cargo of steel on a long voyage from Bourgas, Bulgaria, to Shanghai, China. The hull cracked in the twisting and pounding seas and the ship began to flood. The crew were ordered to abandon their vessel about 290 kilometres south-southeast of the island of Hong Kong. *Hymetus* sank the next day in the South China Sea and it appears that there were no casualties.

Carina is pictured in Montreal in September 1969.

CAPT. JOHN LON PHOTO COURTESY RE



**IN BRIEF** Jerry Seinfeld to perform at Meridian Centre

Iconic standup comic and TV star Jerry Seinfeld is coming to the Meridian Centre in downtown St. Catharines.

The centre confirmed Sunday that Seinfeld – known for his long-running television show – will perform Friday, June 5 at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets for the show will go on sale Friday starting at 10 a.m.

They will be available at the Meridian Centre box office, online at [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca) or charge by phone at 1-855-985-5000.



JERRY SEINFELD

or 'like' the centre on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/MeridianCtre](http://www.facebook.com/MeridianCtre).

The centre offered anyone who is a Meridian Centre Facebook fan or Twitter follower a special VIP pre-sale code released for a two-day pre-sale that started Tuesday morning. Search @MeridianCtre or 'like' the centre on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/MeridianCtre](http://www.facebook.com/MeridianCtre).

## Improve Your Joint, Bone, and Skin Health

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The common medical approach to joint problems is usually pain relievers, steroids and narcotics. These may offer temporary pain



relief but they only work for a short period of time and they come with many unhealthy side effects.

There are much better options for your good health... not only has Nutri Collagen been proven to help your body rebuild lost collagen and bone, its combination of essential amino acids boosts your neurological (brain & memory) health while improving your emotional well-being.

Nutri Collagen also improves the look and feel of your skin by increasing elasticity. Many medical practitioners prescribe collagen to help reverse the signs of aging - it promotes hair growth and keeps skin firm and wrinkle-free. We highly recommend Naka Nutri Collagen for better health.

For more info about Nutri Collagen, visit [RosemarysNaturalChoices.com](http://RosemarysNaturalChoices.com)

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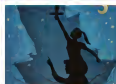
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## ■ NIAGARA REGION: Politicians to be paid \$29,184 annually

# Councillors vote for 2.93% raise

**BOB HOULE**  
*City of Niagara*

It's official, Niagara Region politicians are getting a 2.93% raise retroactive to December.

Councillors voted 17-11 last week to a raise that will see them earn \$29,184 for the 12-month period beginning December 2014, up from \$28,363.

Regional Chair Alan Casslin will see his pay raised to \$120,768 from \$117,330.

A third of the salaries are tax-free. For St. Catharines Councillor, Andy Petrowski, it was a question of fairness.

"The fact is, regional councillors are being paid 25% less than their counterparts," Petrowski said. "Now I've always said we probably can't afford paying automatically as well as the rest of Ontario, but I don't think 2.93% against 25% puts us anywhere close to a situation where we need to put under a microscope whether our councillors are being compensated fairly. And this is all about fairness, and I believe it's fair in order to continue to attract people who want to enter public service, and there's a lot of challenges around that."

"You could say we do it because we want to serve the public, but there are a lot of us, including myself, who are self-employed or work in the private sector who make financial sacrifices."

St. Catharines Councillor, Kelly Edgar, said it is not fair for councillors to take such a pay hike when asking others to take less.

"When we're asking people to pull in their horns and to take less... I think it's only appropriate that we take less as well," Edgar said. "As far as serving the community, I'm just happy to be here."

Referencing a chart provided by the region's head of human resources showing comparable pay with other municipalities, Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn said Niagara regional councillors are not paid 25% less than their provincial peers.

"We're on par, we're not 25% less, maybe if you include the entire comparative group, but those that are part-time councillors... we're pretty much on par," Augustyn said.

The salary hikes are based on a methodology established by a council remuneration citizens review committee that was approved in 2004. The methodology bases councillor and chair pay increases on the 12-month average core consumer price index and the Conference Board of Canada's annual policy line change for non-unionized employees for Ontario.

Augustyn re-introduced an amendment first presented at the corporate services committee by Grimsby Councillor, Tony Quirk, to set raises

to the percentage given to the region's non-union workers, which this year would be 2%. Welland Mayor Frank Campion said he was supportive of the amendment because it would take the decision out of councillors' hands.

"I find it extremely offensive, almost vulgar, to be voting on your own salary," Campion said. "I find it very, very difficult. It's something we shouldn't do and I believe the public would find it quite offensive. We have to take that out of our hands."

Grimsby Mayor Bob Benley said the reason the citizens' committee was formed was to remove councillors from the equation when it comes to setting raises.

"I'm one of those fellows who's been here for a long, long time," Benley said. "I remember why that committee was struck, it was so we didn't have to make a decision on our own. I don't like changing rules as we go along because of the flavour of the day."

St. Catharines Councillor, Bruce Timms said councillors should follow established policy and not use the issue of raises as "a political football."

Augustyn's amendment was voted down and councillors voted 17-11 in favour of the 2.93% raise.

**bob.houle@niaregna.ca**  
**Twitter: @Bob\_Houles**

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**WHAT:** Site Plan Manual – STAKEHOLDER OPEN HOUSE  
**WHEN:** Tuesday, March 10, 2015 at 10:00am – 2:00pm  
**WHERE:** Old Pelham Town Hall (491 Canboro Road, Ridgeville)



**GET CONNECTED – CONTACT US**  
Community Planning & Development Dept  
Terrance Glover, Director  
Phone: (905) 892-2607 ext. 316  
Email: [tglover@pelham.ca](mailto:tglover@pelham.ca)



## GET INFORMED

The Town of Pelham is proposing a new Site Plan Manual that will outline expectations and requirements for all future Site Plan Applications. It is expected that this manual will allow applicants a better understanding of the Town's expectations regarding Site Plan Submissions, thereby reducing the necessity for revisions, and resulting in shorter processing times.

As such, we are asking members of the development community and/or interested public to attend an open house on this proposed 'Site Plan Manual'. The draft Site Plan Manual is available for review on the Town's Website at <http://www.pelham.ca/planning-meetings-notices>

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Tuesday, March 10	7:00 – 8:00pm
Wednesday, March 11	7:30 – 8:30pm
Thursday, March 12	10:00 – 11:00am

### Walking Club - Everyone is welcome - March 10 & March 12

Interested in joining a Walking Club? Then join ours! Tuesdays at Pelham Arena from 9-10am & Thursdays at Fonthill Bandshell from 9-10:30am. For more information, please contact (905) 892-2607 ext. 329.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## ■ NIAGARA REGION

### Councillors opt not to have integrity commissioner

**ROB HOULE**  
QMI Agency Niagara  
Some thought he was  
a waste of money. Others

thought he was good value.  
But at the end of the day,  
Niagara Region no longer  
has an integrity commis-  
sioner to provide oversight

of councillors.  
After lengthy debate last  
week, regional councillors  
voted 17-11 to do away with  
the services of an integrity

commissioner.  
Niagara Falls Coun. Bob  
Gale said he felt the serv-  
ices of an integrity com-  
missioner were a waste

of money long before he  
was elected in October. He  
said the integrity commis-  
sioner was nothing more  
than a tool of attack against  
St. Catharines Coun. Andy  
Petrovski.

"We know why this integrity commissioner was here, let's not lie about it. But I'm proud to sit beside Coun. Petrovski. I find him very smart. I find he's got everything going in the way of politics. He's nurtured me along ... But he wears his passion on his sleeve. He's very loud, as you can tell. The way he talks to some of the staff, at times I disagree with. But if I went into a battle, I'd want him beside me."

Gale said any issues of conduct that arise can be properly handled by the regional chair. Failing that, Gale said Ontario ombudsman Andre Marin, who is slated to be given oversight of municipal governments, assured him in an e-mail he would step into the breach.

Niagara Falls Coun. Selina Volpatti, who was the subject of a complaint to the integrity commissioner, which was dismissed, said hiring one now would be redundant because of the extended reach of the ombudsman.

Welland Coun. Paul Grenier said it was important to keep on retainer an integrity commissioner, albeit with altered guidelines. Guidelines that extend beyond simply enforcing the Niagara Region's code of conduct to include conflict of interest rules.

"The code of conduct should be a minor part ... Our behaviour in public settings and to each other really isn't the main reason we have this," Grenier said.

"The purpose of an integrity commissioner should be this — the primary purpose should be communicating to the public it is a method for the citizens of Niagara to hold us to account. It is an inexpensive and proper way for them to actually hold us

to a higher standard."

The integrity commissioner billed the region approximately \$24,000 in 2014.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Coun. Gary Burroughs, who was chair of the last term of council, said he was privy to complaints other than those filed against Petrovski.

"I had some experience, having been chair during the time of the integrity commissioners ... we had two who did other things than deal with Coun. Petrovski — other councillors. Issues were resolved with staff, and nobody heard about them. And nobody should hear about them. I think we're taking it all very casually that, Oh, it's all about Andy. No it isn't."

Burroughs went on to read from a column by Brock University professor David Segel, who wrote it would be "awkward for councillors to investigate and sanction their colleagues. And it would be inappropriate for staff members to investigate their political masters."

Burroughs said having an integrity commissioner improved relations between staff and council.

"I think the system is right. I think it needs tweaking," Burroughs said.

Port Colborne Coun. David Barrick said he was against hiring an integrity commissioner from the onset.

"My suggestion at the time when this came about was the integrity commissioner role would be used as a political weapon," Barrick said. "It would be used as a witch hunt. Certain people would be targeted, and quite frankly, it's proven itself to be true, at least in my view."

For Niagara Falls Coun. Bart Meeus it's simple.

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rob.houle@sunmedia.ca  
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■ **MUSIC:** Country superstar band surprises Fitch Street kids with donation of 35 instruments

# Lady Antebellum a hit with Welland students

GREG FURNINGER  
QMI Agency Niagara

Lady Antebellum has hit a high note with a Welland elementary school.

One of the biggest acts in country music these days, the Tennessee-based band donated 35 ukuleles to Fitch Street School while in Niagara Falls in February to perform two shows at Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort.

And it all started with a Grade 6 letter-writing campaign for financial aid, its intended target being an audience no further than St. Catharines.

"It's a fabulous story," said Cindy Paskey, executive director at Niagara Education Foundation.

The foundation is a non-profit charity that raised money to provide school programs and services where government funding is not available, including for such things as winter boots and clothing, medications and co-op education placement equipment needs.

When it put out a call for grant requests last October, Fitch Street students took to writing formal requests.

Led by Grade 6 teacher Suzanne Anderson, students spent several hours composing and editing their letters, seeking \$1,500 in aid to help buy new ukuleles. Tying in with curriculum, they focused on words and phrases that would hopefully strike a chord with foundation recipients whose home is the District School Board of Niagara office.

When students later received a rejection letter, "it was a little disappointing," said Anderson, who teaches music and has been at the school for the past two years.

Still, the students politely responded, again in writing, this time with a thank you to express appreciation that their request had at least been considered.

"It really worked out well. They enjoyed the task," said Anderson — who now knows just how well.

Not long after Niagara's education foundation declined the grant — simply because there had been so many applications last fall — Paskey received an e-mail from Universal Music Group. In November the music publisher was search-

ing on behalf of Lady Antebellum to assist a Niagara Falls area school at the time of the band's Feb. 16 and 17 shows.

"I hoped on it right away," said Paskey.

"The band was looking to donate instruments to a school where it would have a big impact."

Remembering all the letters her office had received, she knew right away that Fitch Street "made a natural fit" with the request.

Copies of some of the letters received by Niagara Education Foundation — ended up forwarded to the band.

Cleah wrote about the over-used ukuleles students now use having to be borrowed and shared with other schools. "We would master a song and then, just like a ghost they would vanish."

Wrote Andrew: "When we borrow ukuleles we never know what condition that they are in. They usually have broken strings and the ukulele can literally be broken."

They pulled on the band's heartstrings.

Paskey found herself "sworn to secrecy" about the surprise gift that as a result would be coming to Fitch Street School via, Lady Antebellum and Universal and with the assistance of Little Kids Rock, a U.S.-based charity that supports school music programs south of the border and which put the package of 35 ukuleles together.

Before their concert at the Fallsview casino on Feb. 17, Lady A as the band is affectionately known to fans — and now even more affectionately as "Lady Eh?" for its kind gesture to the Canadian school — recorded a message for Fitch Street students. Charles Kelley, Hillary Scott and Dave Haywood appear in the video showed to the school during an assembly the next morning.

"We hope you have a great time with these — practise, practise, practise," said Scott in the video.

Added Kelley, after thanking students for their letters, and displaying a big thank you card with the school name and "Mrs. Anderson's Grade 6 Class" on the front (the secret slipped out to a

few people): "We know you guys deserve these instruments so much ... and we want you to continue to love music, and hopefully you guys can come see us out at a show some time."

Concluded Scott: "That's for continuing to inspire us."

Lady A posted a photo of the exchange on its Facebook page with a similar message: "Had a great time in Ontario yesterday with the Fitch Street Elementary School! Hope you guys like our new instruments! Now get to practising!"

One of the gifted instruments is signed by the band and will remain on display in the school's showcase cabinet.

"I was very excited for the kids," said Anderson. "We teach them if you work hard at something. You get rewarded."

"It turned out well for them in the end."

The donation to Fitch Street School is an extension of Lady Antebellum's campaign launched last September, 7FOH7, tied to the release of their 747 album, which granted a wish to seven fans over a period of

seven days.

"Since the release of their album they've been doing these '7FOH7' campaigns where they pop up and surprise people all over the country," said Hayley Simmons, of the band's public relations firm The Green Room. "So there's no plan to do this exact same thing again, but the 7FOH7 theme (it) will definitely continue to happen in other forms."

Paskey understands the Welland school will be the only Canadian site benefiting.

A request for interviews with band members could not be accommodated.

Lady Antebellum also founded The LadyAID Fund of The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. It's a philanthropic effort, its website said, to bring awareness to and generate support for the plight of children locally, nationally and globally who cannot otherwise help themselves. The campaign will focus primarily on children's hospitals in the United States and Canada.

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Twitter: @GregAtTheFib



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Country music's Lady Antebellum donated 35 ukuleles to Fitch Street School in Welland. Pictured from left are teacher Tracy Singer, the band's Charles Kelley, teacher Lisa Teal, Lady A's Hillary Scott, teacher Suzanne Anderson, the band's Dave Haywood and teacher Katie Wheeler.



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■ **BICENTENARY:** War of 1812 celebration 'has been a great challenge'

# 1812 legacy council comes to an end



JOHN LAW / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

**JOHN LAW**  
QMI Agency Niagara  
That's a wrap on the War of 1812's bicentenary.  
After six years of planning and three years of events, the Niagara 1812 Legacy Council closed its doors Feb. 27 at its

Thorold office. It relaunched its website as an archival site with photos, videos and media coverage from the past three years. "This has been a great challenge," says the council's chief executive officer Brian Merrett. "A bit sad to see it come to the

end... but feeling satisfied." "I can't believe how fast it went," adds communications officer Katie Farr. "All the years are kind of blurring into each other when you look back at the pictures and places we went."

The council's last official event was the Treaty of Ghent Commemoration in Niagara-on-the-Lake Feb. 17. Although the peace treaty that ended the war was ratified by the British parliament in December of 1814, it took weeks until news reached the U.S., during which

battles continued until the treaty was ratified by the U.S. Senate in February 1815.

The legacy council marked the treaty's 200th anniversary with a procession from St. Mark's Anglican Church to the Court House on Queen St.

"It was the perfect way to end it," says Farr. "That was celebrating the peace."

It was the end of a three-year run which included dozens of events, huge re-enactments and a better cross-border understanding of what the war meant, Merrett says.

Niagara 1812 Legacy Council CEO Brian Merrett and communications manager Katie Farr are wrapping things up. The council's website becomes an archive on Friday for the past three years' worth of events.

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"We feel it was very successful by the things you can measure, like attendance," he says. "But we also think we were able to increase the awareness of the War of 1812, especially locally. They got a chance to understand how important Niagara was to the formation of Canada."

After the legacy council made its last formal presentation to Niagara Region council, the group's website became an online archive. Farr says there will be extensive coverage of events like the 2012 Battle of Queenston Heights re-enactment more than 15,000 people.

It could prove an invaluable asset when future generations celebrate the 300th anniversary of the war.

"Hopefully the Internet is still the same."

The legacy council also contributed material to a new TVCogeco 10 special airing next month. The War of 1812 - 1814 Bicentennial: Niagara's Legacy will be shown March 15 at 9 p.m., March 16 at 8 p.m. and March 20 at 7 p.m.

john.law@summa.ca

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■ TORONTO2015

# Pan Am Games torch relay to roll through Niagara

**DAN DAKIN**  
QMI Agency Niagara  
The Pan Am Games Torch  
Relay will roll through Niag-  
ara in June.  
Organizers of the

Toronto2015 Pan Am and  
ParaPan Am Games have  
announced details of the  
41-day torch run that will  
cover more than 20,000 kilome-  
ters.

The relay will start in



The Welland International  
Flatwater Centre will host  
the canoe and kayak sprint  
events at the Pan Am Games  
and Henley Island in St.  
Catharines will host the row-  
ing events.

While the torch relay will  
stick largely to Ontario cities,  
the tour also includes stops  
in Richmond, B.C., Calgary,  
Winnipeg, Gatineau, Que.,  
Montreal and Halifax.

The names of those  
selected to be torchbearers  
for the tour will be released  
starting in March.

The ParaPan Am games  
will have its own torch relay  
that will run from Aug. 3 to 7  
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## ■ EDUCATION: Aquaponics project to aid greenhouse industry

## College students spending break helping Dominicans

CATY MCCABE  
For WHYY Agency Niagara

Sixteen Niagara College students are in the Dominican Republic for their reading week, in the hope of helping the local greenhouse industry.

Bill MacDonald, who is leading the students on their trip, is a professor at the college's school of environmental and natural studies. He said the students will be demonstrating aquaponics to the Dominican people.

Aquaponics is a combination of aquaculture and hydroponics. Aquaculture or fish farming is the breeding and harvesting of aquatic animals in controlled conditions. In a hydroponic system, plants are grown in water instead of soil. Using

solar-powered pump, water is pumped from the fish tank to the plants. It is filtered through the plants and then the clean water is drawn back down to the fish.

"Aquaponics started in the tropics. It started at the University of the Virgin Islands, so it's something suited, very much, to tropical climates," MacDonald said.

"Long term, I'd love to get a really big aquaponics system going down there."

The plants that can be grown in this system include greens such as lettuce, basil and Swiss chard. He said normally tilapia fish are used in aquaponics, but they are "going to have to see what sort of fish will work there."

While in the Dominican, stu-

dents are also teaching English as a second language. Recreation and leisure students are going to be organizing some sporting activities.

MacDonald said that Cathy Felt, one of the students who went to the Dominican Republic with the college in October, is holding Spanish lessons for the students attending the trip.

Growers Greenhouse Supplies has donated a greenhouse to the college that the students will build in the Dominican. They will be installing anchors for the 77-square-metre structure during this trip and others will be returning in October to finish the project.

Christine Zmud, a first-year horticulture technician student, is on this trip for the first time.

"I've always wanted to not

go as a tourist, but to go see the countryside as somebody who is going to help," she said. "I've always wanted out to teach English in a foreign country, so that is going to be interesting."

Derek Beatty, a renewable energies technician student, went to the Dominican Republic last October with the college.

"It's cool to see how [the trip] has grown. Last time we were doing man-powered pumps to help the irrigation and the greenhouses. We showed them a project, how to make these man-powered pumps and they looked at it and said, 'OK, we can use it for pumping water up the side of the mountain,'" he said.

"We're giving them the tools to succeed. We're not showing them what to do. We're helping



SUPPLIED

Environmental and horticultural studies professor Bill MacDonald with students who are attending Niagara College's aid trip to the Dominican Republic.

them along."

Beatty said the trip "was absolutely life-changing last time."

"Getting the cultural experience is valuable enough, let alone the technical experience."

A second group of students is in Ecuador to participate in a

community build project in the Amazon Rainforest over reading week. It is being led by Jim Norgate, program co-ordinator of police foundations studies at the college.

Both groups will return March 8.

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### ■ DEVELOPMENT: Town evaluating cost of new facility

## Plans move forward for new Pelham arena, community centre

DAN DAKIN  
QMI Agency Niagara

The picture of what Pelham's new community centre might look like if the town decides to move forward in building it is getting clearer.

Estimated to cost between \$22 million and \$27 million to build, Pelham town council has only gone so far as to green light the planning and design phase.

Mayor Dave Augustyn said studies have shown the town needs the facility, and that it can afford to run it, but it will wait to get final construction cost estimates before it will decide whether or not to put shovels in the ground.

"We have to come to grips with those dollars and what it will look like for the community," Augustyn said.

In his regular column, Augustyn last week gave more insight into the guidelines the project's architects are being given to design with.

An architectural design advisory committee was formed last year and came up with recommendations that town council recently approved.

If built, the facility would have a single-pad arena with between 1,200 and 1,500 seats to start, with a plan to add a second rink when demand requires it. It would also have a double gymnasium with a walking and running track above it, a fitness area and multi-purpose rooms. There wasn't enough demand for an indoor pool, especially because of facilities nearby at the YMCA in Welland and at Brock University.

It would be located in the east Fonthill development area at the corner of Hwy. 20 and Rice Rd.

"Now the architect will go off and work on it now that there's more certainty on the recommendations," Augustyn said. "It's at the point where they're going to sharpen their pencils and get into more detailed design."

He said early design drawings are expected to be completed by late March.

If all goes well, and council decides to

move forward with building the community centre, the ultimate goal would be to have it ready by 2017, Augustyn said.

"We're trying to move as quickly as possible, but do the best job possible," he said.

The town is hoping there will be government funding available, including the potential for federal money available for capital projects as Canada marks its 150th anniversary in 2017 — similar to how centennial projects were funded in 1967.

Town council has already decided it can afford to run the building.

The 40-year-old Pelham Arena on Haist St. is costing the town more than \$92,000 a year to operate. It's estimated operating the new community centre would cost \$64,000 in its first year of operation and less in future years.

Tim Toffolo, who owns the Pelham Panthers junior B hockey team, said a new arena is desperately needed.

"We certainly make do with the situation and we're happy to be where we are right now, but there's no question a new facility is needed," said Toffolo, who moved his junior B team to Pelham from Port Colborne last year. The team started a long-term fundraising campaign at the beginning of the hockey season with the goal of raising \$50,000 toward the cost of the new community centre. So far about \$1,000 has been collected through donations at home games and fundraising events.

Toffolo said going with between 1,200 and 1,500 seats, rather than fewer than 800 as was originally planned, is the right move.

"For the sustainability of junior teams in this peninsula, playoffs are big revenue factors and you have to have a building that can host upwards of 1,500 to 2,000 people for gate revenues," he said. "It certainly makes a huge difference for us."

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## ■ MUNICIPAL FINANCE

## Pelham taxes going up an average \$26

GREG FURMINGER  
QMI Agency Niagara

The average Pelham homeowner will pay an extra \$26 this year in town taxes.

Councillors recently signed off on the municipality's nearly \$12.44-million operating budget for 2015.

The result is a 1.92% tax hike, or \$26 for residential homes with an average assessment of \$302,815.

Mayor Dave Augustyn said he and council are "happy" with the budget that was prepared with public input and, he said, illustrates savings brought on by new technologies and work process improvements.

He said staff were told to find efficiencies in their departmental budgets, and they did.

Increases, however, relate to "uncontrollable" costs such as rising insurance rates and negotiated salaries.

There will be two new public works department hirings, like this spring, to be able to service the demands of the growing community, the mayor said.

And instead of tapping reserve funds, a dedicated account was set at \$25,000 for community improvement plan projects.

"It's stay the course on a number of initiatives," Augustyn said of spending this year.

On the capital side of municipal

expenditures, council decided against an additional incremental tax increase of 2% to fund future capital projects, such as a new multifaceted community centre at Rice Rd. and Hwy. 20, which is still in early exploration stages. Augustyn said until council makes a commitment to build, money shouldn't be set aside for it at this point.

"It makes more sense to keep money in people's pockets," he said.

The 2015 capital budget totalling \$6.5 million, funded primarily through other sources of revenue including grants, does include \$1 million earmarked for a design-build of renovations to the Maple Acre branch library in Fenwick.

While the heritage features of the front of the Canboro Rd. building will be maintained, a proper 3,500-square-foot replacement addition is planned for the back of the library.

A request for proposals will likely be issued mid-summer, Augustyn said.

Blended town, region and education tax rates will be presented for town council's consideration in May.

Niagara Region passed its budget last week, representing a tax hike also of 1.92%. On a Niagara home assessed at an average of \$236,134, it will mean an extra \$27.50.

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## Dr. Kimberly Dobson



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